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THE MEETING OF THE OLYMPIAN GAMES.

BY BARON PIERRE DE COUBERTIN.

The Olympian Games of ancient times brought the Greek world together every four years in the beautiful valley of Olympia, to contemplate a spectacle the uniformity of which seems to have constituted an additional charm in the eyes of the spectators. On starting, they knew beforehand almost exactly what they were going to see, and they delighted in the knowledge. In this respect, the inclination of the modern world is entirely different: our contemporaries take pleasure in variety and novelty, and for two reasons—first, because the facility and rapidity of our means of transport have intensified their curiosity; and, second, because, as the duration of their existence has not been prolonged in proportion to the number of objects soliciting their attention, they have not the leisure to see the same things twice.

When, nearly ten years ago, I conceived the plan of reviving the Olympian Games in a modern form, it was necessary for me to observe this tendency and take it into account. To-day, as in former times, the Olympian Games respond to a natural and healthy inclination of humanity: in all times and in all countries, if young men are active and in good health, they will be fond of manly games and competitions in which they display their strength and agility, and, incited by the instinct of emulation, they will desire to contend, in the name of their country, against young men of other lands. But, as regards the arrangement of these periodical festivals, the situation has changed, and the sole means of insuring their success and of rendering them as splendid and brilliant as possible consists in giving them a great variety of aspect.

This is the reason why the International Congress which met in Paris in June, 1894, decided, at my request, that each of the

new Olympiads should be celebrated in a different city of the world, and why Athens was chosen as the scene of the first Olympian meeting in 1896, and Paris as that of the second, four years later. Personally, I cannot repress a strong desire that the third Olympian Games, those of 1904, should take place at New York; then the distinctly cosmopolitan character of my enterprise will be clearly shown.

As concerns variety, I have good reason to rejoice; for nothing will resemble the festivals at Athens in 1896 less than those at Paris in 1900. We have not been drawn into the error of constructing a cardboard Stadium to reproduce that of Pericles, with the hill of Montmartre in the background to replace the Acropolis on its rock. This would have been ridiculous and paltry. We began by considering with good reason that there was no need to trouble ourselves about the preparation of amusements and special festivities, because the Exposition in itself would constitute a permanent festival full of attractions, and hence the organizing committee need only be engaged with the technical part of the sport in question. It happened that at Athens this point had been rather neglected, because the committee was also engaged with the interests of the spectators, and had to take measures for their amusement, for the decoration of the sights and monuments, and for the preparation of attractions of all kinds, in order to bring spectators together in as large numbers as possible and to detain them. Now the same anxiety does not exist, and the interests of the athletes predominate above all else.

I.

The Olympian organization created by the Congress of 1894 is very simple. It consists in an International Committee, of which I have the honor to be President, which numbers about twenty members belonging to the chief nationalities of Europe and America. These include, for example, Prince Serge Beliossel-sky for Russia, Lord Ampthill for England, Count Brunetta d'Usseaux for Italy, Commandant Balck for Sweden, Baron de Tuyll for Holland, Professor William M. Sloane, of the University of Columbia, for the United States, etc. The whole business of the International Committee consists in promoting the celebration of the Games, and in deciding in what country they shall take place. This being done, the International Committee leaves the

immediate preparations for the Games to the sub-committee appointed for that purpose, contenting itself with seconding this sub-committee and supporting it abroad with all its influence. The committee which organized the Olympian Games at Athens in 1896 was not nominated by the government, but by the Crown Prince, who presided over it. That of 1900 has been appointed by the French Government, and is placed under the direction of a Delegate General, who is M. Merillon, a former deputy, now a magistrate, a most distinguished, agreeable and competent man. A statement of the plans for the preparation of the different competitions may interest my readers.

There are ten sections. The first comprises Athletic Sports and Games; the second, Gymnastics; the third, Fencing; the fourth, Shooting; the fifth, Equestrian Sports; the sixth, Cycling; the seventh, Motor Car Racing; the eighth, Aquatic Sports; the ninth, Firemen's Drill; the tenth, Ballooning. It might be objected to this classification that it comprises neither Alpine Climbing nor Skating; that, on the other hand, Firemen's Drill is not sport, and that balloons and the art of guiding them are still in their infancy. But it is impossible to obtain a faultless classification, or to contrive that all kinds of sport without exception should be seen at the same meeting. If, as has been suggested, Sweden should some day organize Olympian Winter Games in ice and snow, they will include Tobogganing, Snow-shoes and Skis, but they will be forced to exclude Cricket, Football and Foot Races. It is an amusing paradox to consider that, in order to render the Olympian Games complete, one would have to go to St. Moritz in the Swiss Engadine, where sun and snow agree all the winter so well that men skate in flannel slippers, and women open their parasols when going for a sleigh-ride. There, indeed, one might, if forced to do so, combine summer sports with those of winter.

Meanwhile, it is a question of spring in Paris, and the restrictions imposed by the place and climate must not be forgotten. On the other hand, the programme as it stands is sufficiently complete to provide most interesting competitions. Thus, the first section comprises athletic sports, foot races, jumping, etc., and games. The distances of the foot races are those of the French championships, in which the best English runners have taken part on several occasions within the last ten years. That is to say,

the distances are very nearly the same. If the "100 yards" has become with us 100 metres, and the "one mile" 1,500 metres (instead of 1609, the exact equivalent of the mile), the hurdle race corresponds exactly to the English distance; the hurdles are of the same height, and they are arranged in the same manner. As to the running competitions, the long and high jumps, pole-vaulting, and putting the weight, they are performed in identically the same fashion. The games entered as international are Football (Rugby and Association), Hockey, Cricket, Lawn Tennis, Croquet and Golf; there will also be a match at Bowls. All these games are played in France. There are others, such as Baseball, La Crosse, etc., of which exhibitions only can be given, as they are not played in France. For example, if the Americans resident in Paris succeed in forming a baseball team to play another team from America, this contest will receive the patronage and support of the Committee of the Exposition, which perhaps will give a prize; but it will necessarily retain an American—that is to say, a purely national—character.

Gymnastics are only open to foreign gymnasts as individuals. Gymnastic societies will not be invited to compete in groups, but only to send their best gymnasts to take part in the international championship, which will be individual. Several gymnastic festivals reserved for French societies only will take place during the course of the Exposition. This is a prudent decision; in adhering to it, no attempt has been made to exclude certain nations whilst admitting others, but the aim has been to avoid trouble and dispute. Gymnastic societies, to whatever country they belong, always behave in a more or less martial fashion; they march in military order, preceded by their national flag. After the troubled circumstances of late years, it would be a delicate affair to unite the flags of recent opponents upon the field of contest.

Fencing includes, of course, matches with foils, with sabres, and with swords. One can foresee a fine contest, in which the French and Italian schools will be opposed, and will establish in a sensational manner their respective merits. Boxing will, of course, be subdivided into English and French boxing, it being impossible to combine the two methods, as has been sufficiently proved by the recent match which took place in Paris between Charlemont, our best French boxing champion, and Driscoll, a second-rate English boxer. The contest will, no doubt, give rise

to some difficulty with regard to the rules to be observed, for these are not yet drawn up with all the clearness desirable.

Then follow the Equestrian and Aquatic sports, *i. e.*, polo, and rowing, sailing and swimming matches. There had been some question of having an equestrian competition in the real sense of the term, but the difficulties of transporting valuable horses, especially during Exposition time, are so great that the idea has been abandoned. There will be target-shooting, pigeon-shooting, archery, and shooting with the cross-bow and with firearms. For cyclists there will be a whole week of track-racing, preceded by a sensational twenty-four hours' race. Lastly, the seventh, ninth and tenth sections will include motor-car races, competitions of sappers and firemen, free balloon races, and trials of carrier-pigeons. All this is doubtless interesting; only it is not pure sport, and for that reason I shall pass it over in this paper.

II.

To judge by the series of letters I have received for many months, American athletes appear to be desirous of participating in large numbers in the Olympian Games on the banks of the Seine; and, as the opportunity of imparting information is afforded me by the NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, I wish to take advantage of it by replying as far as possible to all the questions that I have been asked. These questions are generally the following: What will the competitions consist of? Who will organize them? When and where will they take place? Will they be reserved for amateurs? As to the first question I have already given an explanation. On the second, there is only one word to add—the business of preparing the competitions of 1900 has been assigned to the most competent individuals and societies. For a time the directors of the Exposition appeared to be wanting in interest for sport. Thereupon, a private committee was formed with the object of organizing the Olympian Games, since the Exposition seemed on the point of renouncing them. Last spring, or rather later, the point was reconsidered, and it was decided that sporting competitions should form part of the Exposition in some way or other.

But the Directors, not having the necessary competence, appealed to the societies. This appeal was answered, and with striking unanimity; offers were made to assist the Official Organiz-

ing Committee presided over by M. Merillon. Thus the Paris Polo Club, presided over by Vicomte de la Rochefoucauld, has undertaken the preparation of polo matches; the Society for the Encouragement of Fencing, of which M. de Villeneuve is the devoted director, is empowered to arrange the fencing contests; athletic sports are entrusted to the care of the French Athletic Union, which is not only the most important in France, but also is connected by treaty with the celebrated Amateur Athletic Association of England. Lawn Tennis is directed by the Société de l'Île de Puteaux, founded by M. de Janzé. This suffices to show that, in all branches of sport, care has been taken to enlist competent aid, and this is certainly not an insignificant detail. In how many circumstances have not these very athletic competitions failed, for want of competence in those by whom they were arranged?

At the request of my American friends, I made it a special point that the athletic sports should take place toward the middle of July. In this way the athletes of the American universities, on their arrival in Europe, can take part in the English championships, which take place on the first Saturday in July, and thence travel to the Continent to take part in those of Paris. The gymnastic championship will also be held in July. For fencing, the period chosen is from May 15th to June 15th. The polo matches will take place in succession from June 1st to June 20th. The cycling will take place in September, about the 8th; the rowing matches in June, the swimming in July; generally speaking, the competitions, with the exception of football, which is a winter game, will be held between May 15th and September 15th. This is, doubtless, too long a period; it would have been better for the whole to take place in the space of six weeks, but the Commissary-General of the Exposition insisted on the duration being prolonged as much as possible, and his desire was acceded to.

Just as the competitions will not all take place at the same date, they will not all be held at the same place. Vincennes had been first chosen as capable of uniting them all; but although possessing a wood which almost rivals that of Boulogne situated on the other side of Paris, just at the other extremity, Vincennes does not offer the conditions indispensable to certain sports. It is perfectly adapted for athletic sports, gymnastics, cycling and lawn tennis; a cycling track of fine dimensions is already in

course of construction; there will be tracks for the foot races and good tennis grounds. But it is wanting in space for golf, shooting and polo; as for the lakes, there can be no question of having the rowing, still less the sailing, matches upon them. It is therefore almost decided that the shooting will take place at Satory, near Versailles, in the ordinary exercising ground of the troops garrisoned in Paris; that the polo matches will be played on the Polo Club ground in the Bois de Boulogne; that the rowing matches will take place at Courbevoie, and the sailing matches at Meulan, two pretty spots in the neighborhood of Paris, where the Seine is wide and straight. As for the golf matches, in order to find good links one will have to go to Compiègne, an hour's railway journey from Paris. The Society of Sport at Compiègne has made links which would satisfy the wishes of the most exacting players.

There still remains the most important question—that of amateurism. As different countries have not the same definition of an amateur, one can imagine the difficulties that arise when it is proposed to include representatives of all nations in the same competition. In regard to this point, the conditions are not the same for all branches of sport. The gentlemen who shoot pigeons or who take part in a yacht race look forward to gaining cash prizes, and are not disqualified on that account. In fencing, there are no professionals, strictly speaking, but, on the other hand, professors fence with amateurs; and until of late years all the matches have shown both to be in equal numbers, and no prizes of any kind were ever given—they fought for honor alone. Personally, convinced as I am that amateurism is one of the first conditions of the progress and prosperity of sport, I have never ceased to work for it; and when in 1894 I proposed to revive the Olympian Games, it was with the idea that they would always be reserved to amateurs alone. This time, however, a slightly different theory has prevailed. It was decided that if it was necessary to reserve the first rank for pure amateurs, and in all cases to guard against any person suspected of the slightest taint of professionalism slipping in amongst them, it would be right to have classes for professionals also. There will, therefore, be special competitions for professionals, but the line of demarcation between amateurs and professionals will be strictly laid down and closely adhered to.

The motive which, perhaps, has chiefly influenced this decision is as follows: We are at the beginning of a new century, and the Paris Exposition is certainly a unique, almost an exceptional, occasion for attracting and bringing together representatives of foreign nations of all classes. It is, therefore, a matter of importance to establish records which will be a sort of athletic starting-point for the twentieth century. The amateurs and professionals, without intermingling in the least, will be able to see each other at work, and comparisons advantageous to sport will be the result. I do not say that I am a convert to this way of thinking; it is not my own, and I shall do all in my power that the following Olympian Games may revert to the true theory of amateurism, which declares the uselessness of the professional and desires his disappearance. But I am now explaining another view of the question, which is not without interest, and which, besides, may be accepted, since, by maintaining an absolute separation between amateurs and professionals, it prevents the former from losing their quality of amateurs by commingling with the latter. The direct and personal interests of amateurs will thus be protected and safeguarded in 1900, and that is the important point.

III.

By giving these details, I hope I have sufficiently characterized the competitions of the Exposition of 1900; it may be seen that it will be above all a sporting manifestation of great interest. The fact of the coincidence of the Exposition has the advantage of relieving the organizers of all other anxiety. It is certain that there will be no lack of spectators, and it is certain, also, that foreign athletes will not find their stay in Paris tedious, and that they will carry away a pleasant remembrance of it. On this head it may be, perhaps, as well to remark that the exaggerated statements of the expenses visitors will incur are without foundation. Paris is one of those cities which possess the greatest number of hotels, even in proportion to the enormous number of foreigners who visit it on an occasion of this kind; they are of all descriptions; there are many of those modest, picturesque and comfortable hotels such as are never seen in the New World; in view of the Exposition others will be added to those which already exist. All this constitutes a guarantee that competition will prevent the

prices from being raised beyond reasonable limits. But I could not too strongly recommend the teams who wish to take part in the athletic competitions to intrust the care of preparing and engaging lodgings and making the necessary arrangements for food, etc., only to managers speaking French well, and accustomed to life in Paris or French life in general. Not only, by acting thus, will the team effect a great saving of expense, but they will have the chance of being more comfortably lodged and much better served. It is unnecessary to mention that the sporting societies, and especially the French Athletic Union, which has its offices in Paris, at 229 rue St. Honoré, will take pleasure in assisting foreigners who are coming in any way in their power.

They are coming, by all appearance, in very large numbers. In the course of last summer I visited several European towns, in order to make arrangements with the members of our International Olympian Committee, and I found everywhere a strong desire to send representatives of all kinds of sport to compete in Paris. What struck me during this journey was the astonishing progress made by sport in the last ten years. Anglo-Saxons have some trouble in getting used to the idea that other nations can devote themselves to athleticism, and that successfully. I can understand this, and the feeling is certainly excusable, for they are those who, especially for the last fifty years, have best understood and practiced bodily exercises; but if this honor is incontestably theirs, it does not follow that young men of other races, with blood and muscles like their own, should not be worthy of walking in their footsteps.

The countries that surprised me the most in this rapid advance are Germany and Sweden. Berlin is really on the way to becoming a great sporting centre. I visited with interest the rowing clubs which succeed each other along the banks of the Spree, at the gates of the capital; they are rich and prosperous. It is to be noted that the Emperor takes great interest in rowing; from his private purse he has built a club for the students at the Berlin colleges, and he has founded imperial regattas, for which he gives important prizes every year, and which he often presides over in person. I should be much surprised, after what I have seen, if Germany has not a very fine sporting future before her. She already builds and manufactures boats and all kinds of sporting articles, and this industry seems very prosperous, a proof that it finds a market in

Germany herself, for certainly neither the English nor the French purchase sporting implements from her. As for Sweden, the progress of sport was impeded for a long time by the rather exorbitant pretensions of the famous Swedish Gymnastics, which, having cured numbers of invalids and strengthened countless children, laid claim to suffice also for young men, and to supply for them the place of manly games and exercises of strength. This is, of course, not the case, and the fact that, by the action of the Crown Prince and representatives of gymnastics, with Major Balck at their head, all kinds of sport are more and more practiced, indicates clearly that no system of gymnastics, however complete and scientific it may be, can supply the place of their beneficent action. There are notably two establishments at Stockholm, *Tattersall* and *Idrottspacken*, which include all kinds of sport, from riding to skating, in conditions absolutely worthy of the finest American clubs of New York, Chicago or Boston.

At Vienna, in Austria, an athletic club has been recently opened in the celebrated Prater; the building, which is very elegant, is surrounded by football and lawn tennis grounds and tracks for cycling and foot-races. Lastly, even at St. Petersburg, where they are backward in this respect, a movement in favor of physical exercises is noticeable. It is thus clear that sport is gradually spreading over the whole world, and taking the place of unhealthy amusements and evil pleasures in the lives of young men. This fact will rejoice all true friends of youth and progress. Doubtless, one can discern and regret certain abuses. These may be found in everything; but when one compares the abuses which sport causes with those to which it puts an end, one cannot refrain from singing its praises and laboring for its propagation.

It is for this very purpose that I have revived the Olympian Games, and all that I have said here encourages me in this task. It has enemies, like every other free and living work, but it has also staunch friends who are of great assistance. It is to these that I appeal to prepare from this time onwards the celebration in America of the Olympian Games of 1904, in the persuasion that they will be a great success, and that they will draw across the ocean qualified representatives of all the sporting societies of the world, for a manifestation which will be both worthy of the noble and ancient Olympian past and of the glorious future of the great American Republic.

PIERRE DE COUBERTIN.